

US looks to India to strengthen co-operation in Ayurveda-Siddha-Unani herbal and botanical products of global standard

Thursday, December 09, 2010 08:00 IST
Nandita Vijay, Bangalore

India's rich bio-diversity in herbs has now attracted the US to look for possible collaboration in the area of integrative medicine.

In the last two years, the setting up of the Centre for Research in Indian Systems of Medicine (CRISM) by the Department of Ayush at the National Centre for Natural Products Research, University of Mississippi, USA has increased the co-operation in the field of development of Ayurveda-Siddha-Unani (ASU) herbal and botanical products of global standards.

The Centre is facilitating internationally important joint research for the scientific validation of Indian Systems of Medicine (ISM) including Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha and for creating greater awareness about these systems and their products in the US and other countries.

One of the initiatives to scout for possible alliances was the setting up of the USP-India office at Hyderabad in 2006. This allowed USP to work closely with Indian pharmacopoeia and ASU manufacturers to encourage the manufacture of good-quality, safe, and effective medicines and dietary supplement ingredients and products for the US market.

In a bid to increase the possibility to further give a boost to the sector, Indo-US Symposium on Methodology of Research in Indian Systems of Medicine was organised during the 4th edition of the bi-annual World Ayurveda Congress 2010 in Bangalore. The symposium is focusing on research methodology adopted for validation of ASU products for market authorization in the global arena.

Taking stock of the current status of research in ASU under the Indo-US initiative, strategies are being planned to promote R&D, stated Prof. Shakir Jamil, director general, Central Council of Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM), New Delhi.

“India needs to look at the US for its support in the handling issues of shelf life of ASU drugs and clinical trials among others,” stated Prof Jamil.

According to Prof SS Handa, chairman, Pharmacopoeia Commission of Indian Medicine, New Delhi, the confidence on the quality of Indian System of Medicine has been a major issue despite the six Indian pharmacopoeia reports and 4 volumes for Unani and Siddha Pharmacopoeia references that have provided more clarity on the nomenclature and parameters of quality of herbal and plant medicine.

“The major hurdle in the ASU sector is the execution and implementation of rules and regulations of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act by the small and medium enterprises. The need of the hour is to strengthen drugs control administration, improve the standard of analytical labs used to test the ASU drug samples which would reinforce the current confidence levels of consumers globally and in India. But the reality is that Indian ASU industry is shrugging away from the data generation and protection of Intellectual Property (IP),” he added.

“We need to de-mystify the myths of ASU medicines. There is need to standardise the products and ensure a scientific acceptance of the system. These efforts would be required as US looks to India to strengthen co-operation in developing herbal and botanical products of global standard,” stated Dr Ram Vishwakarma, director, Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine.